2: Durham B-5 (ca. 1910)1928 EG1 Albania EG1
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Birth, Marriage, and Death

In 1392 Bogavach Cuiavich of Rudine of his own free will releases from servitude Radaca, daughter of John of Albania, whom he had bought of Braycho Ucarich.

This seems to have been the case of an actual slave. But the lot of others, when sold for a long term of service, can have been little better than slavery unless they fell into good hands.

ALBANIA

I heard of a similar custom of thus selling children for a term of years in Malacastra in South Albania. Here poor Moslems sometimes sent their daughters as far as Constantinople; and I was told that some of the Albanian beys thus purchased servant-girls from their mothers, and at the end of the term dowered them and married them to peasants on the estate. The Italian Consul at Valona, the first time I was there, told me he had thus purchased a servant girl.

Birth.—In Albania, as in Montenegro, childbirth received but the most ignorant treatment. The death-rate of mothers and children was high.

There was great rejoicing among the mountain tribes when a boy was born and proportionate disappointment over a girl. For a son, especially a first-born, the whole family group turned out and fired rifles.

Some kind of spiritual relationship was held to exist between the child and the woman who cut the umbilical cord; but I learnt no particulars.

As in Montenegro, even in the towns there was the greatest reluctance to summon medical aid. In Scutari one day the Austrian doctor was summoned to a Moslem woman who was in the last stages of exhaustion. He found the child was already dead, and said that to save the woman's life it must be removed at once. The family refused to believe or permit this and dismissed him. Some hours later they fetched him again—but she was dead.

On the birth of a child, both in Scutari and the mountains, all the women neighbours go at once to visit the mother and take offerings of eggs. For a boy, two, four, six, or eight—an even number—are brought; for a girl, one, three, five, or seven. One egg is broken over the child's face to protect it from the Evil Eye. Presumably this makes the child unrecognizable or hideous.

Both in Albania and Montenegro, and I believe in all Balkan lands, infants are swaddled. The cradle is of wood and serves as a packing-case in which to carry the child on its mother's back. In Scutari the cradles are very gaily painted with conventional patterns of flowers and birds,